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NATIVE PEOPLES' CONCERNS
IN POST-SECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR ACTION

PRESENTED TO

THE HONOURABLE DR. A. E. HOHOL,
MINISTER,
ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

SUBMITTED

BY

THE MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON NATIVE PEOPLES' EDUCATION

MARCH 1979

MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIVE PEOPLES EDUCATION

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1. Financing of Students and Programs

1.1 At the October 8, 1978 meeting of the Advisory Committee, it was learned that the Keweenaw Community College had an enrollment of 150 Native students for the academic year of 1977-78. Of those, approximately 85% students failed to return due to poor academic standing. However, the 65 students in attendance at

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This report is written in three parts. The matter of greatest urgency is in the area of financing of students and programs. We are concerned here most urgently with the effects of Federal cutbacks that are affecting Native education in our Province. These are dealt with first. The second division of this report deals with the involvement of Native people in the programs and policies related to their own education. The third part of the report is concerned with the long range aspects of Native education and their relationships to human development. It will be appreciated that while this report is in three parts, there are many Intraconnections among these parts. The education of Native people must be considered as a whole enterprise as well as a number of specific activities.

1. Financing of Students and Programs

1.1 At the October 8, 1978 meeting of the Advisory Committee, it was learned that the Lethbridge Community College had an enrolment of 150 Native students for the academic year of 1977-78. Of these, approximately eight students failed to return due to poor academic standing. However, due to cutbacks in Department of

Indian and Northern Affairs funding, only 70 students were in attendance at Lethbridge Community College in mid-October of 1978. We have since been informed that an additional 30 (approximately) students were unable to continue their courses in Spring semester 1979. Further, we have been informed that similar effects are being felt by Native students who are dependent on Federal Government financing in other post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

We recommend:

- 1.1.1. That the Minister take steps immediately to secure all pertinent, factual information on the effects of Department of Indian and Northern Affairs cutbacks on all Alberta post-secondary institutions and Native students.
- 1.1.2. That the Minister, working through the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs, and by whatever other means he sees fit, take all possible steps to ensure that the Native people of this Province are not unduly penalized by the Federal cutbacks just at the time they are beginning to enter post-secondary education in this Province.

1.2 Funding for post-secondary education

In Lethbridge it was called to our attention that Metis

and Non-status Indians are being denied access to post-secondary education because of financial limitations.

In addition, deserving Native students south of Highway 16 do not have access to a funding resource comparable to those living north of Highway 16.

We recommend:

1.2.1 That the Minister investigate and amend present restrictive guidelines in the Northern Alberta Bursary Program to allow bursary assistance to all academically qualified Metis and Non-status Indians.

1.2.2 That a funding program comparable to the Northern Bursary be established for Southern Alberta, or that the Northern Bursary become the Alberta Bursary.

1.2.3 That provision be made in these bursaries to encourage and provide incentives for those Native students receiving bursaries to spend an appropriate period of time in Native communities following their program financed by bursaries.

1.3 Cutbacks in Canada Employment and Immigration

We have been advised that Canada Employment and Immigration, by 1981, will be withdrawing its training support

for those adults with less than Grade 8 education and/or under age 21. This will affect Native Albertans adversely. This Advisory Committee strongly asserts that ignoring the Native people's real needs for academic upgrading, life-long education and their exclusion from Federal/Provincial Manpower planning is unacceptable. We are concerned with Canada Employment and Immigration policies and practices which implicitly "pick only the winners" and by so doing put added obstacles in the way of Native people for improving their situation in our society.

We recommend:

- 1.3.1 That the Minister insist that a Federal/Provincial Manpower Needs and Planning Committee be activated, to include not only Advanced Education and Manpower, but Indian Affairs, other Federal and Provincial Departments, and representation of Native people, and that this Committee use basic human, as well as manpower considerations as a basis for Manpower training planning. This should include life skills and upgrading in addition to strictly vocational programs.
- 1.3.2 That in Provincial budgeting, specific funding should be set up for Native people's academic upgrading, life skills, and technical/manpower

training to fill the gaps being left by cutbacks,
and to make sure that priorities for Native
people are protected.

1.4 Other Topics

The Native American Studies program at the University of Lethbridge and comparable work at the University of Calgary, and the University of Alberta, particularly through the Blue Quill Project, are meeting the needs for a sound academic training of truly relevant nature for both Native and Non-native students. This development in Alberta higher education is new and requires special support in terms of staffing and financing in our institutions.

We recommend:

1.4.1 That the Minister endeavour to make sure that his civil servants and Deputies are aware of the Native American Studies Departments or their equivalent in Alberta Universities. We feel it is essential for sound counselling, public relations and policy development that the innovations associated with Native American Studies be well understood and appreciated.

1.4.2 That the Minister encourage through specific financial aid to teaching, maintenance and development

of off-campus courses and programs for Native students to help bridge the transition from life in small Native communities to the complexities of life on University campuses.

1.4.3 That since much of the development of Native American Studies has been done through funding secured from private sources, especially foundations, the Minister encourage continued development by means of earmarked funds for this purpose.
has been earmarked

2. Programs and Policies and the Involvement of Native People in Them

2.1 It has been expressed to this Committee on several occasions that many groups within communities, especially Native communities, are unaware of all the services that this Department can provide. This observation provides a challenge to the Department which we think can be readily met.

We therefore recommend:

2.1.1 That the Minister officially recognize any representing, or interested group in which Native people are involved.

2.1.2 That the Minister assist in the formation of these groups.

2.1.3 That leadership training for these groups be

developed and provided. These groups will then become part of a network through which an ongoing supportive process of education would evolve which would serve to inform such interested Native citizens of all the services that this Government, and particularly this Department, can provide.

- 2.1.4 That this process be established through such means as community based workshops and increased utilization of the existing Departmental staff and the staffs of all the Institutions under the legal supervision of the Government.
- 2.1.5 There is one underlying consideration of utmost importance in considering the above recommendations. It is that in the education of Native people, full attention must be given to all Native people whether they live on or off Federal Reserves.

While the above observations and recommendations tend to be of universal application in Alberta, we would now like to move to some further observations and recommendations that are more specific so far as Native people's education is concerned.

- 2.2 We have observed in moving around the Province a lack of local infrastructure for Native adult education. We see

there is a need for leadership training and broad local participation. Behind that need we observe, even though we cannot document, a lack of mobilization of Native motivation. At the same time, all Albertans have probably never had such a rich set of organizations through which to work for education of adults. We think staffs are needed to help Native people share more fully in the organizational aspects of their education, and also to share more fully in the funding and opportunities available and the policies regulating this funding and these opportunities. We observe very often that Educational needs identification has been taken over by the institutions and their personnel serving Native people rather than by the Native people themselves. The recommendations which follow have in mind the inadequacies of the present state of affairs in Alberta which we have observed. The aim of these recommendations is to help correct the situation.

It is recommended:

- 2.2.1 That the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower authorize appropriately constituted Native Education Committees to approve adult education courses when such approval complies with the applicable Departmental policies. (Examples: Vocational Training; Adult Upgrading; Further Education; etc.)

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2.2.2 That such Committees be eligible for all financial assistance available to other Committees and to Non-native communities, (Examples: Advertising, travel, leadership, and administrative grants) and, furthermore, that consideration be given to supplementing such grants when special need is indicated.

2.2.3 That the Department make available, upon request, leadership, Committee operation, and policy interpretation training opportunities, to all Native Education Committees.

2.2.4 That in communities where it is not practical to constitute separate Native Education Committees, but which have a significant Native population, the Department encourage and where possible require that adult education institutions and councils which receive funding from the Department provide for proportionate representation by Natives on their governing boards/councils.

2.3 Since so many of the problems faced by adult Native people in manpower and post-secondary pursuits are related, directly or indirectly to the deplorable failure of the school system in educating native children, it appears that many of the fore-

going recommendations, as well as recommendations which follow this, could be immeasurably strengthened in their implementation if there were improved liaison and coordination with programs and policies of the Department of Education especially, and other Departments including Alberta Social Services and Community Health.

We recommend:

- 2.3.1 That as an interim measure the Department of Advanced Education request its Advisory Committee on Native People's Education to increase its contacts with comparable bodies and/or officials from these other Departments in an effort to encourage a more comprehensive and long range view of the total needs for education of Native people.
- 2.3.2 That the Minister of Education be encouraged to direct greater attention to the educational needs of Native children, youth, and parents at the Ministerial level of Government and the articulation of these needs with the education and manpower needs of adult Native people generally which fall within the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower's mandate.

2.4 We have observed that Native people do not have the same measure of political participation and responsibility in decision making about education as all other Albertans enjoy. In saying this we must recognize the unique relationship of Treaty Indians with the Federal Government.

We recommend therefore:

2.4.1 That the goal of Advanced Education and Manpower and all other government departments is to make possible the same measure of political participation and responsibility in decision making for Native people.

3. Long Range Aspects of Native Education and Their Relationship to Human Development

3.1 The Advisory Committee recognizes that the problems and challenges facing the Native people and their education have historical roots and will require time for their resolution in overall effective ways. They cannot be handled completely in terms of short term or intermediate term planning. It is with these in mind that we state our observations and recommendations regarding the long range human development of Native people.

We have observed communities in which there is an inadequate economic base for the large Native population which

live in them. We also observe that in Native communities of no or limited economic base, training is often considered nonviable from an economic perspective.

From this observation, it seems that Native Albertans have been confronted with four possible choices of strategy for low economic base communities:

- (1) To physically relocate an entire community by directive, coercion, or incentive. Examples: Chipewyan Lake to Desmarais in the 1930's; Little Red River to Fox Lake in the 1960's; Fox Lake to Jean D'Or Prairie in the 1970's.
- (2) To provide public assistance as the sole community support. The examples are almost too numerous to list among Native communities.
- (3) To create temporary "project employment" as a sole means of livelihood. Examples: Local Initiatives Programs; Local Employment Assistance Programs.
- (4) To create an economic base and provide the training and education necessary to maintain the community with a degree of self-sufficiency and/or export capability.

This Committee goes on record as strongly supporting the last alternative as the only long range viable solution. ✓

3.2 We observe that Government involvement to date (Federal and/or Provincial) has had these characteristics:

- (1) The tendency is for programs to be developed from a conceptual base rather than from an assessment of actual needs identified by the Native people.
- (2) Programming decisions have been based primarily on so-called "hard data" (e.g. census-data, money losses in operations, etc.) rather than on human development needs.
- (3) Human development needs have been made to conform to economic and administrative requirements. This policy has increased dependency rather than independence or interdependence.
- (4) There has been a tendency to cast Native people in the role of "servants of policy" rather than of contributors to policies designed to serve their needs.

We think that the recent history of development programs in Northern Alberta indicates clearly that basic to resource

development is the maximization of the human resource side as the very foundation on which all other development depends if it is to benefit Native people as well as those in the larger society served by its highly technical economy.

With these considerations in mind we therefore recommend:

3.2.1 That Advanced Education and Manpower commit themselves to an initial cost-intensive programming in human resource development, or at the very least take the leadership in obtaining an interdepartmental commitment for such intensive programming in human resource development. We think the present "wheel-spinning" policy of providing training primarily for employment placement must be revised. Human resources development must become a priority. Past and present policies which have given priority to manpower and educational programs have had disappointing results.

3.2.2 In order to establish better economic bases for Native communities in Alberta, we urge that the creative nature of this process be given recognition. The establishment of sound economic bases for communities requires the order, predictability and fulfillment of contracts that can come from

established Departments of Government. The process also involves strong contesting and competition for limited resources in both public and private sectors of the economy. Above all, it involves, in the initial and subsequent stages, the creative inputs of local and non-local persons and agencies. We see the process of development of better economic bases for communities with large Native populations as an opportunity for these people to learn the skills and attitudes to help Native people meet their responsibilities and maintain their rights and dignities as human beings. In terms of strategies, we think this underlying conception of a balance between order, contest, and creativity should undergird all efforts to improve Native people's lot through education.

It could be said that education in all centres, small or large is as much a family and community process as an institutional or agency set of programs or an individualized teacher-learner relationship. The quality of education is directly dependent upon community life. As the quality of community life improves for Native people it will be expected that the quality of their education both in terms

of its input and its output may also increase. In all this conceptualization we see that Advanced Education and Manpower has at this juncture, a catalytic role to play in helping increase the economic viability and quality of life for native communities.

3.3 We turn next to the matter of career counselling. We observe that Native people in Alberta have an excessive drop-out rate from school and from employment. We attribute this in part to the fact that Native people have not been made aware of the life choices available to them at the critical periods of development in their life, particularly in the Junior High or teen years. As a consequence, the occupational choices and life styles adopted become less than satisfying and productive, and tend to perpetuate for Native people many of the problems which have been identified in this report.

With these observations and thought in mind, we would recommend:

3.3.1 That career counselling be provided. That this career counselling be made available within their own environment from individuals to whom the Native person can relate effectively. We see this career counselling as an integral part of all educational and training programs.

3.3.2 In view of the importance of career counselling, we recommend that a condition for participation in any educational and training programs should be prior and continuous involvement in the counselling process. Career Centres must take the initiative to ensure that effective career counselling is being delivered to individuals and communities at the local level.

3.4 We observe that very often Native people lack the economic and human resources to acquire permanent or even good temporary employment. This has been the experience in Fort McMurray and could be the experience in the Cold Lake and other areas of Alberta where industrial development is imminent. Native community groups are typically regarded as not assuming responsibility relative to acquiring employment in the industry. This is a partial truth. We interpret this behaviour as reflections of the constraint and prejudices placed on them, and of their own assessment of readiness for these opportunities.

With these observations in mind, we recommend:

3.4.1 That human resource development be given a high priority in order that Native people might be able to profit from work opportunities opened up by increased industrialization and at the same

time be able to cope better with the inescapable and attendant problems of social change which will affect them. We recommend that human resource development be thought of in two ways:

- (1) The human resource development of developers and industrialists coming into an area, and
- (2) the human resource development of the people who will be participating in and affected by the developments or planned changes in their own areas.

Human resource development must have these two sides. It is our view that the human resource development is at least a two stream flow. It flows toward Native people and, from the Native people to the dominant society. In this flow the real merits of Native people, including their desire and their willingness to survive and be permanent residents in what may be considered to be some of the harshest areas of Alberta, should be considered in manpower planning and training.

We cannot attempt here to develop suitably all the specific recommendations which could be made if the above concept of human resource development in relation to Native people were to be actively used in thinking about specific programs and activities. We do think it is important that Native

people in developing areas learn not only job skills but also about how to live with and manage in corporate and labour organizations in such a way that they may realize individual development, self involvement, and satisfaction as community members.

As a final comment, we reiterate that an overall goal in all our recommendations is to assure Native people equal opportunity for political participation and responsibility in decision making about education at all levels, including that of the community.

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Alberta. Minister's Advisory Committee on Native Peoples' Education.

Native peoples' concerns in post-secondary and adult education

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